Harvard Summer School
HARVARD DIVISION OF CONTINUING EDUCATION

EXPO S-15
Fundamentals of Academic Writing

Summer 2025

Course Information

CRN: 34902
Section Number: 1
Format: Live Attendance Web Conference
Credit Status: Undergraduate
Credit Hours: 4

Course Description: This course is designed for students seeking preparation for EXPO E-25, which is a course required for admission to the undergraduate program at the Harvard Extension School. Students review such basics of academic argument as thesis, claims, evidence, and structure. Students complete short writing assignments that help develop the skills essential for producing persuasive academic essays. Students also learn strategies for reading and analyzing complex texts.

Instructor Information & Office Hours

Steven Wandler
Email: wandler@fas.harvard.edu
Office Hours:
By appointment: please email me to setup

Course Goals / Learning Outcomes

Writing is a crucial skill that nearly every scholar considers central to his or her work in academia. Writing is not, however, simply the mastery of a particular technique or genre of expression; the writing process mirrors the scholarly process itself. In order to know what to write, we must first learn to analyze, criticize, and question. In order to know what is important to write, we must learn to develop, refine, and reconsider our questions and arguments. In order to write clearly, we must learn to organize, structure, and articulate our ideas and arguments. In this course, we will be working on each of these skills (and more). We will be practicing them extensively, but that is not all: we will also be thinking about why these skills are important, how they are crucial to the thinking and writing process, and, further, how these skills can be transported into other writing assignments you will be working on in the future throughout your academic career.

However, as you will see from the many essays that we read throughout the summer, there is no single formula for what constitutes "good" writing, either across the different academic fields or, even, within any one of them. Instead, writing – like the act of thinking itself – can be done effectively in a variety of ways to a variety of ends, and we will therefore be considering writing as a process that takes place over time and that crucially involves responding to readings, developing ideas, testing arguments in drafts, and reconsidering and refining those arguments through revision.

Mode of Attendance & Participation Policy

Class meetings take place over Zoom. Because they involve active participation, discussion, and dialogue, you are expected to attend all class meetings. Please arrive on time. You should attend Zoom meetings with a functional web-camera and microphone, prepared with materials needed, to engage thoughtfully, and with your camera on. You may turn off your camera for occasional interruptions or momentarily for privacy.

You will also need the most up-to-date Zoom client installed on your computer to join class. Please participate from a safe and appropriate environment with appropriate clothing for class. Participating while traveling or in a car is not permitted. In addition, please do not join class via mobile phone or web browser.

Please be sure to review important information on **Student Responsibilities and Policies**.

Writing Program Policies

Attendance

Because Writing Program workshops are collaborative and discussion based, your presence and active participation are essential to their success and to your growth as a writer. While I urge you to attend all class meetings, I can excuse one absence during the Summer term. If your absences exceed this limit, I will be obliged to document them and tell you that additional absences may result in exclusion from the course or a final grade of E. The attendance rule applies even if you miss the first class meeting because you are changing courses during the first week of the term in accordance with Division of Continuing Education rules.

Deadlines

This course is a planned sequence of writing; meeting assignment deadlines is crucial. Failing to meet deadlines may disrupt the workshop schedule and impede the course's progress. It may also result in exclusion from the course or a final grade of E.

First-Day Writing Sample

I will ask you to complete—in person (in on-campus courses) or with your camera on (in online courses)—a brief skills-check writing sample during our first meeting. While the sample provides only a snapshot of your writing, it can help us determine if the course will be a good fit for you. Therefore, the sample must be submitted during class, at a time I specify. It won't be graded, but I am not permitted to accept it after the deadline. If you submit the writing sample after the deadline, you must contact me to schedule a time to complete a new writing sample (in response to a different prompt) before our next meeting. Note that the Writing Program deadlines policy applies to the writing sample. Note also that if your sample suggests that you would benefit from a lower-level course, I may recommend that you drop my course.

Dual Submission

Harvard requires that all work submitted for a course be original and produced solely for that course. A writing course is an opportunity to develop your skills; submitting the same writing assignment twice for credit undermines that opportunity and may result in disciplinary action. If you wish to continue to develop an essay or story that you began in another course, you must receive written permission for your plan from your instructors.

AI Technologies

Because the work of Writing Program courses involves learning to develop, structure, revise, and edit your own text, the use of AI technologies, including generative AI tools such as ChatGPT, is strictly prohibited in this course. AI technologies may not be used in any phase of the process, including brainstorming, outlining, drafting, revising, and editing.

The Writing Center

The Harvard Summer School Writing Center is open to all registered Summer School students, whether you are studying on campus or online. The Writing Center is staffed by trained tutors (Harvard undergraduates and graduate students) who provide individual conferences to students working on any writing assignment. Tutors are also available for consultations on college application essays and graduate school application essays. Find out more about the Writing Center at https://summer.harvard.edu/academic-opportunities-support/services/the-writing-center/

How to Schedule an Appointment

You can schedule an appointment by visiting the online scheduler (login required). You don't have to have a finished paper to schedule a conference. You can come with ideas, notes, or a draft.

How to Contact the Writing Center

The best way to contact the Writing Center is to email at dcewriting@gmail.com. You can also check out the Writing Center's website for more information and links to useful information about writing.

Assignments & Grading

Grading

Final grades will be determined according to the scale below. Please note that as the semester progresses, assignments will be graded with increasing rigor. In other words, as we learn more about writing and develop as writers, I will be holding you to higher standards: what may be forgiven in the first response paper or essay will not be forgiven

in the second (this applies especially to the technical matters of citation). Note also that you will get grades on revisions only (i.e., drafts are required but not graded). Grades on revisions are final; you may not revise a revision for another grade.

We will discuss grades and the grading process in class, but please note that grades for this class should not be thought of in the same way that they might be in other classes. Writing is a process of thoughtful articulation and revision – there is never a single "correct" essay against which your essay will be graded. Instead, essays will be better or worse in how they accomplish particular goals and purposes; essay grades will reflect this rather than a pre-established standard.

Unit Essay 1: 40%

Unit Essay 2: 40%

Response Papers and other writing assignments: 20%

Grade Definitions

Students who complete the requirements of a course will earn one of the following grades:

A (100% to 94%)

A– (< 94% to 90%)

Earned by work whose superior quality indicates a full mastery of the subject—and in the case of A, work of extraordinary distinction. There is no grade of A+.

B+ (< 90% to 87%)

B (< 87% to 84%)

B– (< 84% to 80%)

Earned by work that indicates a strong comprehension of the course material, a good command of the skills needed to work with the course materials, and the student's full engagement with the course requirements and activities.

C+ (< 80% to 77%)

C (< 77% to 74%)

C– (< 74% to 70%)

Earned by work that indicates an adequate and satisfactory comprehension of the course material and the skills needed to work with the course materials, and that indicates that the student has met the basic requirements for completing assigned work and participating in class activities.

D+ (< 70% to 67%)

D (< 67% to 64%)

D– (< 64% to 61%)

Earned by work that is unsatisfactory but that indicates some minimal command of the course materials and some minimal participation in class activities that is worthy of course credit.

E (< 61% to 0%)

Earned by work that is unsatisfactory and unworthy of course credit. This grade may also be assigned to students who do not submit required work in courses from which they have not officially withdrawn by the withdrawal deadline. Zero or E grades are assigned to students for missing work. These grades are included in the calculation of the final grade.

Course Materials

Various
All course texts will be provided free through the Harvard Library. See the course schedule for details.

Community Charter

By enrolling in courses offered by the Harvard University Division of Continuing Education (DCE), individuals agree to abide by our community standards to promote a culture of trust, cooperation, mutual understanding, and learning. Members of the DCE community, including students, faculty, and staff, are expected to treat each other with dignity and

communicate respectfully and appropriately across all channels. Our commitment to academic integrity and excellence includes holding ourselves accountable for our actions. Violations of these community standards may result in disciplinary actions.

DCE adheres to all University-wide policies that address discrimination, bullying, and harassment. Resources including the Office for Gender Equity and the Harvard Ombuds Office are available to assist community members with concerns.

Academic Integrity Policy

You are responsible for understanding Harvard Summer School policies on Academic Integrity and how to use sources responsibly. Violations of academic integrity are taken very seriously. Visit Resources to Support Academic Integrity and the Harvard Guide to Using Sources to review important information on academic citation rules.

Turnitin

This course uses Turnitin, a text-matching software platform that assists with plagiarism detection. By enrolling in this course, you consent to the submission of your assignments to Turnitin. Additional information about Turnitin is available on the Academic Integrity webpage.

Accessibility Services Policy

The Division of Continuing Education (DCE) is committed to providing an accessible academic community. The Accessibility Services Office (ASO) is responsible for providing accommodations to students with disabilities. Students must request accommodations or adjustments through the ASO. Instructors cannot grant accommodation requests without prior ASO approval. It is imperative to be in touch with the ASO as soon as possible to avoid delays in the provision of accommodation.

DCE takes student privacy seriously. Any medical documentation should be provided directly to the ASO if a substantial accommodation is required. If you miss class due to a short-term illness, notify your instructor and/or TA but do not include a doctor's note. Course staff will not request, accept, or review doctor's notes or other medical documentation. For more information, email accessibility@extension.harvard.edu.

Publishing or Distributing Course Materials Policy

Students may not post, publish, sell, or otherwise publicly distribute course materials without the written permission of the course instructor. Such materials include, but are not limited to, the following: lecture notes, lecture slides, video, or audio recordings, assignments, problem sets, examinations, other students' work, and answer keys. Students who sell, post, publish, or distribute course materials without written permission, whether for the purposes of soliciting answers or otherwise, may be subject to disciplinary action, up to and including requirement to withdraw. Further, students may not make video or audio recordings of class sessions for their own use without written permission of the instructor.

Canvas Access After End of Session

The Canvas website for this course will remain available to enrolled students for a limited time after the course concludes. **You are encouraged to download coursework and materials you wish to keep before the Summer session ends**. See Course Formats & Required Technology for additional information on Canvas access.

Class Meeting Schedule

Please note: Individual conferences will be held throughout the summer. Information and sign up sheets will be made available at the appropriate time.

Week 1

June 23: • Intro to course and policies • Intro to argument • In-class writing assignment	• Complete In-Class Writing (by 9:30pm) • Read Steven Pinker, "Why Academic Writing Stinks"
June 25: • What makes a good writer • What makes a good argument • Who is Michael Sandel?	• Read The Case against Perfection, chapter 1 • Complete Response Paper 1: Summarizing Sandel (due 6/30 @

• How (and why) we summarize	8am)

Week 2

June 30: • Discussing Sandel's case • What makes a good argument: evidence	• Read Case, chapters 2-3 • Complete Response Paper 2: Analyzing Sandel's evidence (due 7/1 @ 8am)
July 2: • Discussing Sandel's case, continued • What makes a good argument: questions • Finding your question & writing your intro • Daniel Hemel's Lincoln essay	• Read Case, chapter 4-5 • Complete Response Paper 3: The Intro Paragraph (due 7/7 @ 8am)

Week 3

July 7: • Workshopping intros • Finalizing your argument • Essay structure & academic grammar	• Complete Essay 1 Thesis Statement and Outline (due 7/9 @ 8am)

July 9:
• Essay 1 Drafting strategies and tips:
  ◦ arguments
  ◦ structure
  ◦ quoting and citing
	• Complete Essay 1 Draft (due 7/13 @ 5pm)

Week 4

July 14: • Revision strategies • Essay 1 workshop	• Complete Essay 1 Revision (due 7/20 @ 11:59pm)
July 16: • Final revision strategies • Intro to Unit 2	• Continue Essay 1 Revision (due 7/20 @ 11:59pm) • Read Harry Frankfurt, *On Bullshit* • Read Hicks et al., "ChatGPT is Bullshit"

Week 5

July 21: • Discuss "bullshit" • Developing argumentative comparisons • Intro to thinking about multiple texts in conversation & comparison	• Read Nicholas Carr, "Is Google Making Us Stupid" & from *Superbloom* • Read Sherry Turkle, from *Reclaiming Conversation* • Complete Response Paper 4: Comparing ideas (due 7/23

	@ 8am)
July 23: • Discuss Carr & Turkle • Using others' voices in your argument	• Read Michael Lynch, from *The Internet of Us* • Complete Response Paper 5: Finding Your Question (due 7/28 @ 8am)

Week 6

July 28: • Discuss Lynch • Essay 2 argument, structure, and outline • Drafting Essay 2	• Complete Essay 2 Thesis Statement and Outline (due 7/30 @ 8am)
July 30: • Drafting Essay 2	• Complete Essay 2 Draft (due 8/3 @ 5pm)

Week 7

August 4: • Essay 2 Revision strategies • Essay 2 Draft workshop	• Complete Essay 2 Revision (due 8/6 @ 11:59pm)
August 6:	

Final class meeting Essay 2 Revisions due, 11:59pm	